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TAGS: TBIO KFLU ECON PREL SOCI CASC EAGR MX GM
SUBJECT: GERMANY H1N1 FLU UPDATE: 332 CONFIRMED CASES

REF: A) Berlin 754, B) Berlin 747 and previous.

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The number of H1N1 cases in Germany rose to 332 on June 24, as thirty-one new infections were confirmed. State Health Ministers are meeting today in Thuringia to discuss H1N1 situation. Chancellor Merkel visited the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) on June 23 and assured that the country is well-prepared for wider spread of the virus. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On June 24, the National Reference Center for Influenza at RKI announced in its press briefing 31 new laboratory-confirmed cases of H1N1 for Germany. This increases the total number of confirmed cases in Germany to 332 (Refs A, B and previous). The new cases were distributed among the federal states as follows: North Rhine-Westphalia (14), Baden-Wuerttemberg (11), Bavaria (3), Rhineland Palatinate (1), Schleswig-Holstein (1) and Lower-Saxony (1).

¶3. (SBU) Fourteen of the 31 newly confirmed cases reported today occurred in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW). NRW remains the state showing the highest number of infections among all the German states with 160 confirmed cases, followed by Bavaria (47 cases) and Baden-Wuerttemberg (44 cases). The Federal State of Saarland remains the only state without confirmed virus cases. The number of confirmed infections resulting from domestic transmission of the virus now sits at ¶178.

Chancellor says Germany well-prepared

¶4. (SBU) RKI officials said there are signs that indicate the A/H1N1 virus was mutating, warning a more aggressive form of the infection could soon start to spread world-wide. However, after a visit to RKI in Berlin on June 23, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that the country is "well prepared" for such a scenario. According to Merkel, the German government is in contact with the international community to address the issue. The Chancellor also said that the only currently unresolved domestic preparation issues relate to vaccination procedures in the event of wider spread.

Health Minister's Conference

15. (SBU) The Health Ministers of the 16 federal states reportedly are meeting on June 24 in Erfurt (Thuringia) to discuss further measures to address the flu, including countermeasures such as vaccinating the entire German population.

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